

**MACMILLAN  
CANCER SUPPORT**

# The beauty of support

**Talking hair culture & cancer taboos  
within black hairdressing salons**

We've put together everything we know about helping people with cancer in this Macmillan Community Resource for Hairdressers.

**Let's help our community deal with cancer together.**

SCAN HERE



# Macmillan Community Resource for Hairdressers

## Introduction

This booklet includes a guide to the many different Macmillan services and how to make a salon feel like a 'safe space' where black women can break taboos around discussing cancer. We hope that, by sharing this, we can create a better future for women from African and Caribbean backgrounds who are affected by cancer. That's the power of sharing.

## Meeting people where they are

Cancer will have a big impact on people's everyday lives, in all kinds of unexpected ways. Macmillan provides support for many of the impacts of cancer and cancer treatment. All people are different, so we have a range of different ways of sharing information.

Your clients may need practical information and support with day-to-day tasks to help take the strain off them and their families. They might need financial support.

We can also offer support for your client's emotional needs. Your clients can contact our cancer support team for free on **0808 808 00 00**, chat online or email us at **contact@macmillan.org.uk**. Language and accessible support are available.

We've also included some ideas about how to talk about cancer based on what people in our cancer support groups have told us over the years. Thank you for being part of the conversation.





## Macmillan Cancer Support for changing times

We have over 100 years of experience in helping people living with cancer. When we were founded in 1911, cancer was something people never talked about, and to have cancer was seen as something shameful. Times and attitudes have changed, and we've continually adapted the support we offer to make sure it's right for everyone today.

### A summary of Macmillan services

- Macmillan Website and Online Community
- Macmillan Support Line (Nurses and Advisers)
- Personalised email campaigns
- Volunteer services
- Information from professionals
- Information centres
- Wellbeing coaches

### Helping your clients find the help available to them from Macmillan

Your clients might be looking for relevant information to help them understand their cancer, the medical world, and what to expect from the different stages they may experience, including going through diagnosis.

They will want to know what they need to do to have the best chance of a positive outcome. Some of your clients will get all the information they need from our comprehensive website. Others will need different kinds of help, which we offer as well.

Your clients can contact the Macmillan Support Line by phone, webchat (online community) or by email at [contact@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:contact@macmillan.org.uk).

### Personalised support

Macmillan has informational booklets available in 16 languages, including sign language and easy reading. We also have an interpreter service available on our support line. (Just call **0808 808 00 00** and tell us in English the language you need.) So, if you are speaking with one of your clients in a particular language, or you know they have additional needs, you can show them the available support and how they can access it.

# The Macmillan website

The Macmillan website contains a wealth of information, including different cancer types, tests, screening, getting diagnosed, treatments, living with cancer and end-of-life care. People with cancer can create an account that will help personalise the content that is relevant to them. Clients can also complete an online personal guide and sign up for regular emails that match their needs at different stages.

Your clients can visit our website for information about managing money worries and find out what benefits they may be entitled to. They can also complete an online money and cancer guide to get personalised information to help them.

## **Local support information**

Search 'Macmillan In Your Area' to identify local services that benefit people living with cancer.

## **Booklets and information**

We provide cancer information of all kinds in different languages and formats, including audiobooks, Braille, British Sign Language videos, easy-read booklets, eBooks and large print. These are available from our website, or your client can visit your local Information and Support Centre to speak to someone in person and pick up relevant leaflets.

For information specifically for you and for black women affected by cancer, go to [www.macmillan.org.uk/thebeautyofsupport](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/thebeautyofsupport)



# The Macmillan support line

**Call 0808 808 00 00. We are open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.**

The Macmillan Support Line services are delivered by specialist teams and operate 365 days a year. From answering clinical questions to helping ease money worries, our trained teams provide vital support and guidance to everyone who needs it. People with cancer can access this over the phone, email or even web chat.

## **1. Speak to Nurses and Advisers**

Your client can contact our information specialists and nurses to ask specific questions in person.

## **2. Cancer Information and Support Advisers**

Our advisers provide emotional support and a hugely diverse range of practical information, and can direct callers to other specialist services relevant to their individual needs.

## **3. Cancer Information Nurse Specialists**

Experienced cancer nurses use their clinical skills to talk through specialist information on symptoms and diagnosis, treatment, living with cancer and palliative care.

## **4. Specialist financial support**

Your clients may be worried about money and looking for practical guidance to help them cope. They might want to know what support they are entitled to and how they can get help accessing it. They can speak over the phone or meet with our team face-to-face to find out what payments your clients may be entitled to, and for help completing the right forms.



# Our specialist money and work teams provide support in these categories:



## Financial Guidance

Helps to minimise the financial impact of cancer by doing an assessment of needs. Our team offer personalised guidance to help people with mortgages, insurance, pensions, estate and financial planning, and explain financial products to help people manage their finances and future planning.



## Welfare Rights

Provides information on benefits and support that people may be entitled to, such as personal independent payments, universal credit, employment and support allowance. Ensuring people living with cancer are not missing out on payments they may be entitled to. Our advisers can also check eligibility and support applications for a Macmillan Grant to help with the financial impact of cancer, along with onward referrals to other specialist services, including our Energy Advice team.



## Energy Advice

Our energy specialists can provide advice for people struggling with utility bills. The team can also check entitlement to any additional support available through charitable grants, energy company support schemes, trust fund support, boiler schemes, water company support schemes, and tariff considerations.



## Work Support

Your clients may want to talk to someone about problems at work, and may be worried about their job because they've had a cancer diagnosis.

They may need to understand if they have rights at work and, if so, what they are and how they make sure they get them. We can help them understand their work rights, whether employed or self-employed. They can contact our specialist team for free on 0808 808 00 00, chat online or email them at [contact@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:contact@macmillan.org.uk). The work support team can support your clients with information and advice on things like rights at work (e.g. the Equalities Act), talking to an employer, reasonable adjustments, returning to work, and carers' rights and can refer them for one-off legal advice if needed.



## Macmillan Grants

Macmillan Grants are one-off payments for people over 18 years old affected by cancer on low incomes who need immediate support with costs caused by or related to their cancer. The money used to buy specific items such as specialist equipment or to meet other needs, paying for travel to the hospital or helping to fund a much-needed break.



Don't be afraid to say for...  
Being a woman and having breast cancer is a...  
of what you can do for your health. You can...  
The best way to get more information is to...  
breastcancer.org

AN  
PROJECT  
Breast cancer awareness gives women power

...to be diagnosed with breast cancer is a...  
...that many other women. Unlike other...  
...have had some, awareness is...  
...with breast cancer is...  
...with a great...  
...to a big...  
...comes to speaking... it

# Emotional support

It helps to talk. Your clients can contact our cancer support team for free on **0808 808 00 00**, chat online or email them at **contact@macmillan.org.uk**. They are here to listen and give expert support. Your clients can get help from others living with cancer from our Online Community, from our local Support and Information Centres, from our Macmillan Buddy volunteers and from specialist counsellors.

## Online Community

Your clients can get information from other people with cancer through our Online Community.

The Online Community is a safe website where people living with cancer can share their experiences and find emotional and practical support from others in a similar situation.

People can also get expert advice from Macmillan professionals in the Ask an Expert area. The Online Community can be accessed through the Macmillan website at any time, day or night. It can be used anonymously, in confidence and from the comfort of home. People of all ages and regardless of where they are in their cancer experience, can use the community to talk about anything cancer-related.

Many groups are set up within the community to meet specific needs and interests, including groups for people with different types of cancer, people with children, or bereaved family and friends.

The Online Community is moderated and supported by Macmillan employees, medical experts, and volunteers – it is a safe place where everyone supports each other.







### **Macmillan Buddy Service**

For more personal support, your client can register online to get a Macmillan Buddy – a trained volunteer for them to talk to regularly.

The Macmillan Buddy service offers three ways people living with cancer can get direct support from a community, telephone, or digital Buddy for 8 to 12 weeks of support. Community Buddy volunteers can help with light cleaning, gardening, food shopping, social time in an outdoor place or accompanying someone to a support group.

All our Buddy volunteers provide a listening ear and emotional support, and many service users tell us this is really valuable and that they open up about things they don't want to talk to family and friends about.

Your clients can request a Buddy who speaks their language or who can communicate in British Sign Language or request face-to-face or text support chat with other people with cancer on our Online Community.

### **Bupa Counselling Services**

In partnership with Bupa, Macmillan are offering up to six sessions of free one-on-one counselling to people living with cancer. A qualified therapist will lead these sessions and could help your client understand, manage and overcome difficult feelings they may be experiencing right now.

Bupa counselling is for anyone with cancer who is over 18, feeling anxious or worried, depressed, or sad, and in need of someone to talk to. Patients can access the service by calling the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** and asking about the Bupa service.

# Creating a place for the conversations that matter

**Someone with cancer might feel fear, anger or frustration. Talking to a good listener can help. You're probably already skilled at this, but here are some specific ways to help your clients with cancer.**

- Let them talk when they are ready. Don't feel you have to talk about the cancer.
- You don't need to have the answers. Listening can be enough. Even if it goes quiet for a time, try not to be afraid of the silence or feel you have to fill it.
- Set a limit on how long you will talk. Talking about feelings can be tiring.
- Try to listen instead of thinking about what you are going to say next. When the person with cancer is talking, please pay attention to what they are saying.
- Respect the other person's feelings. They might want to talk about things you find hard to hear.
- Try not to say that everything will be fine or encourage them to be positive. It can sound as if you are not listening to their worries. It is better to let people speak honestly about their feelings.
- Repeat back what you have heard. This helps you check you have got it right and shows you are listening. You might say things like, 'So you mean that...?'. You may find your own way of saying this, especially if you know each other well.
- It's not helpful to tell the person about other people's stories. Cancer is different for everyone. They will get the specific information they need from their healthcare team.
- Use humour cautiously. Sometimes it can help, but it may make things difficult if they are feeling sad or worried. Resist the urge to cheer them up.
- Showing empathy is everything. If they start to cry as they talk, you could say something like, 'I can see how upsetting that is for you'. If you are close to them, you could simply sit with them and hold their hand or find a quiet space in the salon.





### Listening deeply

Listening is just as important as talking. We all like to feel that we have been heard, especially when talking about something serious. You may feel unsure about how to comfort the person you care for. But just listening to them when they talk can make a real difference. You don't need to have all the answers. Listening and talking can help you both understand what the other person is feeling.

### The power of silence

It is also important to have conversations about things other than cancer. There will be times when you prefer to talk about day-to-day subjects. Or sometimes you may just want to carry on doing your client's hair quietly. It's ok not to talk all of the time. There may be times when you want to talk, but your client does not. Or the other way around.

Take your cues from the person with cancer. Ask the person with cancer if they would like to talk about the experience. It is best to allow him or her to decide when to talk and how much to share.

Show support without words. Your body and facial expressions can also convey your message of care and support. Keep eye contact, listen attentively and avoid distractions when talking. One important way to provide support is to share some silence without needing to drown it out with chatter.

Choose your words carefully. Make sure to acknowledge how difficult this experience is for the person. Carefully choosing what you say can help you show your support without being dismissive or avoiding the topic. For example, it is better to say "I don't know what to say" than to stop calling or visiting out of fear.

### Things you can say to show your support:

- I'm sorry this has happened to you
- If you ever feel like talking, I'm here to listen
- What are you thinking of doing  
How can I help?
- I care about you
- I'm thinking about you

### Things you might say that could be unsupportive:

- I know just how you feel
- I know just what you should do
- I know someone who had the exact same diagnosis
- I'm sure you'll be fine
- Don't worry
- How long do you have

### Practice active listening

To be an active listener, give your full attention, avoid thinking about what to say next, or hurrying the conversation and forcing it to a conclusion. Phrase your questions carefully and limit the number of questions that you ask in a conversation.

**You're not just a hairdresser, you're running a community centre and creating a place for conversations that matter. Because your clients are more than just customers and your business is more than a business, you can help us help your customers affected by cancer. Together, we can be there for the people who need us. Thank you for getting involved.**

**Useful links for hairdressers and clients:**

- Raising Your Voice toolkit  
[macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help/raising-your-voice-toolkit](http://macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help/raising-your-voice-toolkit)
- From Me to You, The Art of Survival, a support group for Black Communities  
[cancercaremap.org/care-provider/from-me-to-you/](http://cancercaremap.org/care-provider/from-me-to-you/)
- Caring For Hair – Trichologist Hair Specialist in Afro Hair  
[caringforhair.org/about-us](http://caringforhair.org/about-us)
- Look Better, Feel Good  
[lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk](http://lookgoodfeelbetter.co.uk)
- Wigs For Heroes  
[cancerhaircare.co.uk/afro-hair](http://cancerhaircare.co.uk/afro-hair)
- Afro Hair Guidance Cancer Hair Care  
[wigsforheroes.org](http://wigsforheroes.org)
- Black Women Rising  
[blackwomenrisinguk.org](http://blackwomenrisinguk.org)
- Future Dreams  
[futuredreams.org.uk](http://futuredreams.org.uk)
- Cancer Black Care  
[cancerblackcare.org.uk](http://cancerblackcare.org.uk)

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